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1961/11/01

TOP SECRET

THE WHITE HOUSE
WASHINGTON

EYES ONLY FOR THE PRESIDENT

November 1, 1961

MEMORANDUM FOR THE PRESIDENT:

I believe that the concept of a "command operation" for Cuba, as discussed with you by the Attorney General, is the only effective way to handle an all-out attack on the Cuban problem. Since I understand you are favorably disposed toward the idea I will not discuss why the present disorganized and uncoordinated operation cannot do the job effectively.

The beauty of such an operation over the next few months is that we cannot lose. If the best happens we will unseat Castro. If not, then at least we will emerge with a stronger underground, better propaganda and a far clearer idea of the dimensions of the problems which affect us.

The question then is who should head this operation. I know of no one currently in Cuban affairs at the State Department who can do it. Nor is it a very good idea to get the State Department involved in depth in such covert activities. I do not think it should be centered in the CIA. Even if the CIA can find someone of sufficient force and stature, one of the major problems will be to revamp CIA operations and thinking -- and this will be very hard to do from the inside.

I believe that the Attorney General would be the most effective commander of such an operation. Either I or someone else should be assigned to him as Deputy for this activity, since he obviously will not be able to devote full time to it. The one danger here is that he might become too closely identified with what might not be a successful operation. Indeed, chances of success are very speculative. There are a few answers to this:

(1) Everyone knowledgeable in these affairs -- in and out of government -- is aware that the United States is already helping the underground. The precise manner of aid may be unknown but the fact of aid is common knowledge. We will be blamed for not winning Cuba back whether or not we have a "command operation" and whether or not the Attorney General heads it.

EYES ONLY FOR THE PRESIDENT

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(2) His role should be told to only a few people at the very top with most of the contact work in carrying out his decisions being left to his deputy. If that deputy is someone already closely identified with the conduct of Cuban affairs then it would appear as if normal channels are being followed except that decisive attention would be given to the decisions which came through those channels. There are probably three or four people who could fulfill this criterion.

This still leaves a substantial danger of identifying the Attorney General as the fellow in charge. This danger must be weighed against the increased effectiveness of an operation under his command.

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Richard N. Goodwin

EYES ONLY FOR THE PRESIDENT

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